

The random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

St Leonard's Church, Downham , Lancashire. The Devils Footsteps.

Deep in the heart of Downham, a small village nestled amidst the rolling hills of Lancashire, stood the ancient St. Leonard's Church. It was a place of tranquility and spiritual solace for the villagers, a sanctuary that had weathered the test of time. But within its hallowed walls, there existed a chilling mystery that sent shivers down the spines of those who dared to venture into the shadows.

Legend spoke of an eerie phenomenon known as "The Devil's Footsteps." It was said that during the witching hour, when the moon was obscured by ominous clouds, a spectral presence would manifest within the church. It was believed to be the devil himself, walking through the nave, leaving a trail of ethereal footprints in his wake.

The tale was whispered from generation to generation, passed down as a macabre bedtime story to warn children against venturing near the church after sundown. The villagers lived in a state of perpetual unease, torn between their fascination with the supernatural and the desire to protect themselves from the unknown.

One moonlit night, Emily, a curious young woman with a penchant for adventure, decided to unravel the enigma that had plagued her village for centuries. Driven by her insatiable thirst for knowledge, she embarked on a daring quest to witness the Devil's Footsteps firsthand.

As the clock struck midnight, Emily tiptoed through the cobbled streets, her heart pounding in her chest. She reached the ancient wooden doors of St. Leonard's Church, and with trembling hands, pushed them open. The scent of old timber and dampness filled the air, mingling with a subtle undertone of mystery.

A shroud of darkness enveloped the nave, broken only by the flickering candles that adorned the altar. Emily stepped cautiously, her eyes scanning the shadows for any sign of the devil's spectral presence. The air grew colder, and her breath materialized before her eyes.

Suddenly, a soft whisper echoed through the air, sending a chill down Emily's spine. "Who dares disturb my realm?" a disembodied voice murmured. Emily's heart raced, but she steeled herself, determined to face whatever awaited her.

"I am Emily," she spoke into the darkness, her voice filled with a mixture of fear and curiosity. "I seek answers, knowledge about the Devil's Footsteps. Why does this phenomenon haunt our village?"

Silence engulfed the church, and Emily wondered if her words had fallen upon deaf ears. But then, a dim light flickered from the far end of the nave, revealing a cloaked figure standing before her. It was an elderly man, his eyes twinkling with ancient wisdom.

"You possess great courage, Emily," the old man said, his voice carrying a haunting melody. "The Devil's Footsteps are not what they seem. They are not the machinations of the devil himself, but rather a testament to the resilience of our village."

Emily's brow furrowed in confusion, her curiosity piqued. The old man continued his tale, recounting the events that had taken place centuries ago. He spoke of a time when the village faced a grave peril, besieged by dark forces that sought to bring ruin upon its inhabitants.

In their darkest hour, the villagers united, forming a pact with the supernatural realm. They made a sacrificial offering, dedicating their church as a bastion of light against the encroaching darkness. In return, a benevolent spirit, known as the Guardian, bestowed upon them the Devil's Footsteps—a symbol of protection and a reminder of their indomitable spirit.

Tears welled up in Emily's eyes as she listened, overwhelmed by the resilience and courage of her forefathers. The old man imparted upon her the responsibility of carrying on the village's legacy, safeguarding the secret of the Devil's Footsteps and protecting Downham from the

forces of darkness.

From that moment forward, Emily embraced her newfound purpose. She became the guardian of St. Leonard's Church, ensuring its sanctity and preserving the legacy of the Devil's Footsteps.

The village of Downham thrived under her watchful gaze, and the mysterious phenomenon became a cherished symbol of their enduring spirit.

To this day, visitors to St. Leonard's Church marvel at the ethereal footprints that grace the nave, now understanding the story behind their existence. And Emily's legacy lives on, a testament to the power of curiosity, bravery, and the enduring bond between a village and the mysteries that lie within its midst.

By Donald Jay.